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AMERICA/EL SALVADOR - Truce between the gangs with the help of the Church, but the country is hoping for a definitive solution

San Salvador (Agenzia Fides) - Today newspapers of El Salvador report the news that the Salvadoran Minister of Security, David Munguia, admitted that a "truce" is taking place between bloody gangs of the country and this has led to an "unprecedented" fall of the number of murders, but warned that there is "no guarantee" on this agreement and that it is not a lasting solution concerning the problem of violence.
A note sent to Fides from the local Church points out that yesterday Minister Munguia publicly admitted that the Catholic Church through the castrense Bishop, Monsignor Fabio Colindres, was the protagonist of this truce, speaking to the leaders in prison of the two main armed gangs in the country, Mara Salvatrucha and La Mara 18. This statement triggered a controversy in the Central American country.
In an official speech in front of the Under-Secretary of State of the United States for the Security of the Citizen, Democracy and Human Rights, Maria Otero, Minister Munguia stressed "the important work that the Catholic Church has done to reach a truce between the two rival gangs. This gesture, combined with extensive operation carried out by the National Civil Police (PNC) for the control and prevention of crimes, has begun to yield results,"said the Minister.
In a press conference after the official act, Munguia described as "unusual and unprecedented" the fact that killings have declined from a daily average of 14 to 4 or 5 as a result of this truce between the gangs, announced last week by Mgr. Colindres. He however acknowledged that the pact is not a permanent solution to the problem of extreme violence in El Salvador, a country of just over 6 million people, where in 2011 there were 4,354 murders, according to official data. El Salvador has a rate of over 60 deaths per 100,000 population per year, while the world average is 8.8 according to UN figures. The government has confirmed that the gangs are responsible for 90% of these murders.
Fides has also received some reports about the controversy in the country, where someone was surprised by the Bishop of action, because "one cannot bargain with these gangs, they have to disappear completely". A faithful Catholic wrote: "The problem is not now, the problem is later, when the truce is over". A third report, the most negative, warned that the truce is only for gangs "to regain strength and attack again" (CE) (Agenzia Fides 28/3/2012)

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